

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2005

Secretary Carlos Gutierrez
Office of the Secretary
Room 5516
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th & Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Gutierrez:

As members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, we are alarmed and offended by reports that in order to pass the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), Bush Administration trade officials and their allies in the business lobby will pursue a strategy of portraying CAFTA opponents as being "anti-Hispanic".

We refer to a report in Congress Daily AM (See attached, "Bias, Labor Rights Roil Debate Over Central America Pact".) from Tuesday, January 25. The article states:

"The Bush administration and K Street backers of the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement will argue that the pact reinforces political stability in the region -- and **try to cast opponents of the agreement as anti-Hispanic, sources familiar with the pro-CAFTA coalition's strategy said.**

" 'What message would it send to say, "We're not going to trade with poor Latinos?" ' said a **U.S. trade official who has been in contact with the pro-CAFTA business lobby on strategy for lobbying Congress on the agreement.**"
[Emphasis added.]

We represent a variety of perspectives on trade issues, and we find any attempt to inject ethnic rhetoric into this debate highly offensive.

Serious questions regarding the future of commerce and development in our hemisphere will be discussed and decided in the CAFTA debate. The substance of this debate is about the best way to increase growth and human living standards for our nation and our neighbors in the Americas. Thoughtful people can reasonably come to different conclusions on whether or not CAFTA is the best way to pursue this goal.

This debate is too important to be sidetracked by inflammatory and irrelevant accusations of ethnic bias. Both sides can and should debate the substance of CAFTA, including its impact on Latinos in the US and Central America, without resorting to name-calling.

We seek your assurance that you agree that ethnic-based attacks on either side of the CAFTA debate are inappropriate and extraneous to this discussion and that you will discourage your officials and allies from engaging in these underhanded tactics and repudiate their efforts if and when they do.

We look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

Grace Haru Napolitano

Michelle Young

Joe Baca

Lucille Roybal-Allard

Ed Pastor

Linda T. Sanchez

Linda Sanchez

Alma L. Lopez

John R. ...

Don ...

Jo. E. ...

Dan ...

Raul M. Grijalva

John ...

John T. Salazar

...

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2005

Ambassador Robert Zoellick
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Zoellick:

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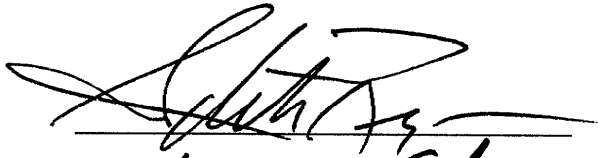
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Sincerely,

Grace Marie Napolitano 

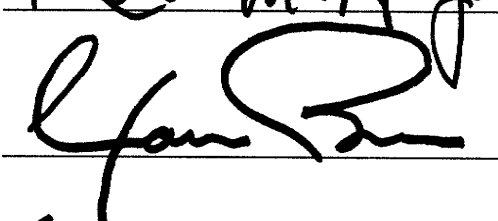
Charles J. Jones 

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Raul M. Grijalva

Linda F. Sanchez 

Loretta Sanchez

John F. Salazar

Hilda L. Lira

